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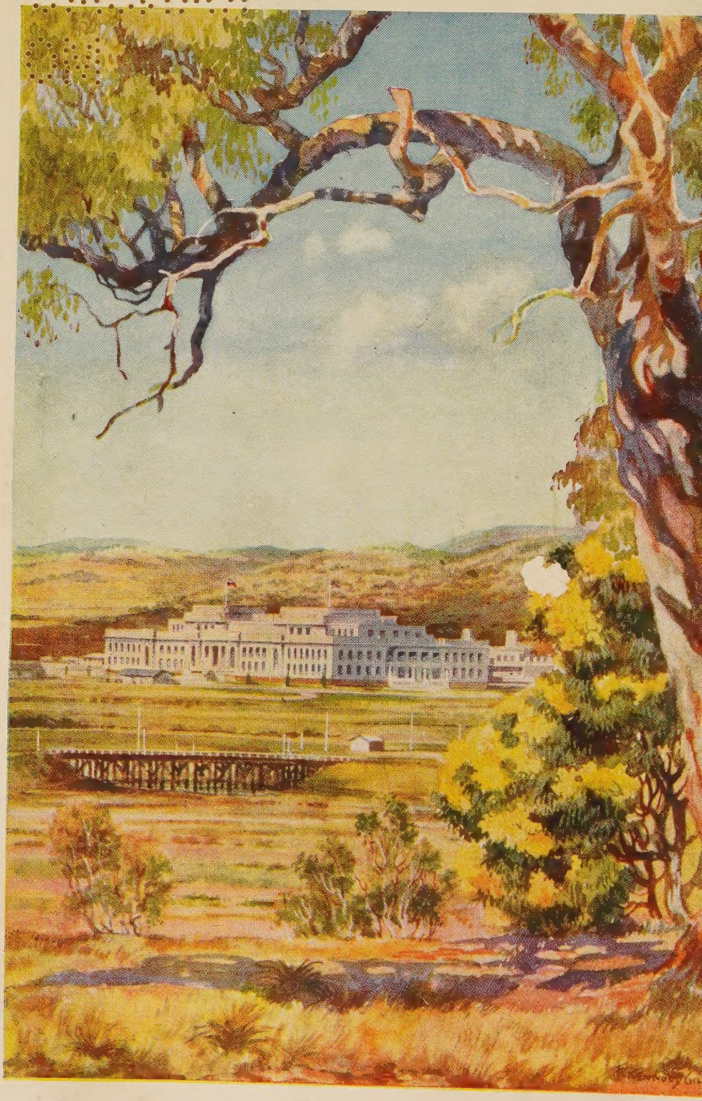

THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, CANBERRA. *Page 25* F. K. G

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

AUSTRALIA

BY

FRANK FOX

THIRD EDITION

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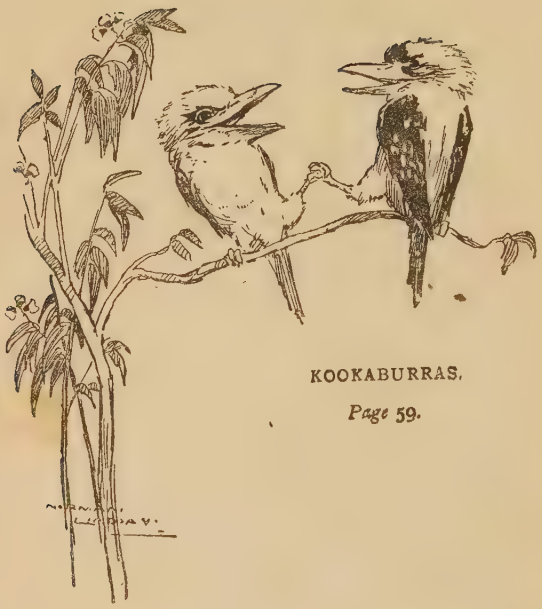

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AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER I

ITS BEGINNING

A "Sleeping Beauty" land—The coming of the English—Early explorations—The resourceful Australian.

THE fairy-story of the Sleeping Beauty might have been thought out by someone having Australia in his mind. She was the Sleeping Beauty among the lands of the earth—a great continent, delicately beautiful in her natural features, wonderfully rich in wealth of soil and of mine, left for many, many centuries hidden away from the life of civilization, finally to be wakened to happiness by the courage and daring of English sailors, who, though not Princes nor even knights in title, were as noble and as bold as any hero of a fairy-tale.

How Australia came to be in her curious isolated position in the very beginning is not quite clear. The story of some of the continents is told in their rocks almost as clearly as though written in books. But Australia is very, very old as a continent—much older than Europe or America or Asia—and its

story is a little blurred and uncertain partly for that reason.

Look at the map and see its shape—something like that of a pancake with a big bite out of the north-eastern corner. In the very old days Australia was joined to those islands on the north—the East Indies—and through them to Asia ; but it was countless ages ago, for the animals and the plants of Australia have not the least resemblance to those of Asia. They represent a class quite distinct in themselves. That proves that for a very long time there has been no land connection between Australia and Asia ; if there had been, the types of flower and of beasts would be more nearly kindred. There would be tigers and elephants in Australia and emus in Asia, and the kangaroo and other marsupials would probably have disappeared. The marsupial, it may be explained, is one of the mammalian order, which carries its young about in a pouch for a long time after they are born. With such parental devotion, the marsupials would have little chance of surviving in any country where there were carnivorous animals to hunt them down ; but Australia, with the exception of a very few dingoes, had no such animals, so the marsupials survived there whilst vanishing from all other parts of the earth.

When Australia was sundered from Asia, probably by some great volcanic outburst (the East Indies are to this day much subject to terrible earthquakes and volcanic outbreaks, and not so many years ago a whole

island was destroyed in the Straits of Sunda), the new continent probably was in the shape somewhat of a ring, with very high mountains facing the sea, and, where now is the great central plain, a lake or inland sea. As time wore on, the great mountains were ground down by the action of the snow and the rain and the wind. The soil which was thus made was in part carried towards the centre of the ring, and in time the sea or lake vanished, and Australia took its present form of a great flat plain, through which flow sluggish rivers—a plain surrounded by a tableland and a chain of coastal mountains. The natives and the animals and plants of Australia, when it first became a continent, were very much the same, in all likelihood, as now.

Thus separated in some sudden and dramatic way, Australia was quite forgotten by the rest of the world. In Asia, near by, the Chinese built up a curious civilization, and discovered, among other things, the use of the mariner's compass, but they do not seem to have ever attempted to sail south to what is now known as Australasia. The Japanese, borrowing culture from the Chinese, framed their beautiful and romantic social system, and, having a brave and enterprising spirit, became seafarers, and are known to have reached as far as the Hawaiian Islands, more than halfway across the Pacific Ocean to America; but they did not come to Australia. The Indian Empire rose to magnificent greatness; the Empires of Babylon, of Nineveh, of Persia,

came and went. The Greeks, and the Romans later, penetrated to Hindustan. The Christian era came, and later the opening up of trade with the East Indies and with China.

But still Australia slept, in her out-of-the-way corner, apart from the great streams of human traffic, a rich and beautiful land waiting for her Fairy Prince to waken her to greatness. There had been, though, some vague rumours of a great island in the Southern Seas. A writer of Chios (Greece) 300 years before the Christian era mentions that there existed an island of immense extent beyond the seas washing Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is thought that Greek soldiers who had accompanied Alexander the Great to India had brought rumours from the Indians of this new land. But if the Indians knew of Australia, there is no trace of their having visited the continent.

Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, who explored the East Indies, speaks of a Java Major as well as a Java Minor, and in that he may refer to Australia; but he made no attempt to reach the land. Some old maps fill up the ocean from the East Indies to the South Pole with a vague continent called Terra Australis; but plainly they were only guessing, and did not have any real knowledge.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Spanish and Portuguese sailors pushed on bravely with the work of exploring the East Indies, and some of their maps of the period give indications of a knowledge of the existence of the Australian Continent. But the

definite discovery did not come until 1605, when De Quiros and De Torres, Spanish Admirals, sailed to the East Indies and heard of the southern continent. They sailed in search of it, but only succeeded in touching at some of the outlying islands. One of the New Hebrides De Quiros called "Terra Australis del Espiritu Santo" (the Southern Land of the Holy Ghost), fancying the island to be Australia. That gave the name "Australia," which is all that survives to remind us of Spanish exploration.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Dutch sailors set to work to search for the new southern land, and in 1605, 1616, and 1617 undoubtedly touched on points of Australia. In 1642 Tasman—from whom Tasmania, a southern island of Australia, gets its name—made important discoveries as to the southern coast. He called the island first Van Diemen's Land, after Maria Van Diemen, the girl whom he loved; but this name was afterwards changed. Maria Island, off the coast of Tasmania, still, however, keeps fresh the memory of the Dutch sailor's sweetheart.

But none of these nations was destined to be the Fairy Prince to waken Australia out of her long sleep. That privilege was kept for the British race; we cannot but think happily, for no Spanish or Dutch colony has ever reached to the greatness and the happiness of an Australia, a Canada, or a South Africa. It is in the British blood, it seems, to

colonize happily. The gardeners of the British race know how to "plant out" successfully. They shelter and protect the young trees in their far-away countries through the perils of infancy, and then let them grow up in healthy and vigorous independence. This wise method is borrowed from family life. If a child is either too much coddled, or too much kept under in its young days, it will rarely grow to the best and most vigorous manhood or womanhood. British colonies grow into healthy nations just as British schoolboys grow into healthy men, because they are, at an early stage, taught to be self-reliant.

It was not until 1688 that Australia was in any way explored by the English Captain, William Dampier. His reports on the new land were not very flattering. He spoke of its dry, sandy soil, and its want of water. This Sleeping Beauty had a way of pretending to be ugly to the new-comer.

From 1769 to 1777 Captain Cook carried on the first thorough British exploration of Australia, and took possession of it and New Zealand for the British Crown. In 1788, just a century after its first exploration by a British seaman, Australia was actually occupied by Great Britain, "the First Fleet" founding a settlement on the shores of Port Jackson, by the side of a little creek called the Tank Stream. That was the beginning of Sydney, at present one of the greatest cities of the British Empire.

A great continent had been thus entered. The Sleeping Beauty was aroused from the slumber of

centuries. But very much had yet to be done before she could "marry the Prince and then live happily ever afterwards." The story of how that was done, and how Australia was explored and settled, is one of the most heroic of our British annals. True, no wild animals or warlike tribes had to be faced; but vast distances of land which of itself produced little or no food for man, the long waterless stretches, the savage ruggedness of the mountains, set up obstacles far more awesome because more strange. Man had to contend, not with wild animals, whose teeth and claws he might evade, nor with wild men whose weapons he could overmatch with his own, but with Nature in what seemed always a hostile and unrelenting mood. It almost seemed that Nature, unwilling to give up to civilization the last of the lonely lands of the earth, made a conscious effort to beat back the advance of exploration and civilization.

On the little coastal settlement famine was soon felt. The colonists did not understand how to get crops from the soil. They attempted to follow the times and the manners of England; but here they were in the Antipodes, where everything was exactly opposite to English conditions. There were no natural grain-crops; there were practically no food-animals good to eat. The kangaroo and wallaby provide nowadays a delicious soup (made from the tails of the animals), but the flesh of their bodies is tough and dark and rank. Even so it was in very limited supply. The early settlers ate

kangaroo flesh gladly, but they were not able to get enough of it to keep them in meat.

Communication with England, whence all food had to come, was in those days of sailing-ships slow and uncertain. At different times the first settlement was in actual danger of perishing from starvation and of being abandoned in despair at ever making anything useful of a land which seemed unable to produce even food for white inhabitants.

Fortunately, those thoughts of despair were not allowed to rule. The dogged British spirit saved the position. The conquest of Nature in Australia was perseveringly carried through, and Great Britain has the reward to-day in the existence of an all-British continent having nearly 5,000,000 of population, who are the richest producers in the world from the soil.

After the early settlers had learned with much painful effort that the coast around Sydney would produce some little grain and fruit and grass for cattle, there was still another halt in the progress of the continent. West of Sydney, about forty miles from the coast, stretched the Blue Mountains, and these it was found impossible to cross. No passes existed. Though not very lofty, the mountains were savagely wild. The explorer, following a ridge or a line of valley with patience for many miles, would come suddenly on a vast chasm ; a cliff-face falling absolutely perpendicularly 1,000 feet or so would declare " No road here." Nowadays, when the Blue Mountains have been conquered, and they are

THE BARRIER OF THE BRUT MOUNTAINS *Page* 8 *and* 21

traversed by roads and railways, tourists from all parts of the world find great joy in looking upon these wonderful gorges; but in the days of the explorers they were the cause of many disappointments—indeed, of many tragedies. Men escaping from the prisons (Australia was first used as a reformatory by Great Britain) would attempt to cross the Blue Mountains on their way, as they thought, to China and freedom, always to perish miserably in the wild gorges.

Finally, the Blue Mountains were conquered by the explorers Blaxland, Lawson, and Wentworth. Two roads were cut across them, one from Sydney, one from Windsor, about thirty miles north from Sydney. The passing of the Blue Mountains opened up to Australia the great tableland, on which the chief mineral discoveries were to be made, and the vast interior plains, which were to produce merino wool of such quality as no other land can equal.

From that onwards exploration was steadily pushed on. Sometimes the explorers went out into the wilderness with horses, sometimes with camels; other tracts of land were explored by boat expeditions, following the track of one of the slow rivers. The perils always were of thirst and hunger. Very rarely did the blacks give any serious trouble. But many explorers perished from privation, such as Burke and Wills (who led out a great expedition from Melbourne, which was designed to cross the continent from north to south) and Dr. Leichhardt.

Even now there is some danger in penetrating to some of the wilder parts of the interior of Australia without a skilful guide, who knows where water can be found, and deaths from thirst in the Bush are not infrequent.

One device has saved many lives. The wildest and loneliest part of the continent is traversed by a telegraph line, which brings the European cable-messages from Port Darwin, on the north coast, to Adelaide, in the south. Men lost in the Bush near to that line make for its route and cut the wire. That causes an interruption on the line; a line-repairer is sent out from the nearest repairing-station, and finds the lost man camped near the break. Sometimes he is too late, and finds him dead.

In the west, around the great gold-fields, where water is very scarce, white explorers have sometimes adopted a way to get help which is far more objectionable. The natives in those regions are very reluctant to show the locality of the waterholes. The supply is scanty, and they have learned to regard the white man as wasteful and inconsiderate in regard to water. But a white explorer or traveller has been known to catch a native, and, filling his mouth with salt, to expose him to the heat of the sun until the tortures of thirst forced him to lead the white party to a native well. But these are rare dark spots on the picture. The records of Australian exploration, as a whole, are bright with heroism.

The early pioneer in Australia — called a

"squatter" because he squatted on the land where he chose—enjoyed a picturesque life. Taking all his household goods with him, driving his flocks and herds before him, he moved out into the wilderness looking for a place to settle or "squat." It was the experience of the "Swiss Family Robinson" made real. The little community, with its waggons and tents, its horses, oxen, sheep, dogs, perhaps also with a few poultry in one of the waggons, would have to live for many months an absolutely self-contained life. The family and its servants would provide wheelwrights, blacksmiths, carpenters, veterinary surgeons, cattle-herds, milkers, shearers, cooks, bridge-builders, and the like. The children brought up under those conditions won not only fine healthy frames, but an alertness of mind, a wideness of resource which made them, and their children after them, fine nation-builders.

I am tempted, in illustration of this, to quote from a larger work of mine, "Australia," an instance of my own observation of the "resourceful Australian":

"Without touch of cap, or sign of servility, the swagman came up.

"'Gotter a job, boss?'

"'No chance; but you can go round and get rations.'

"'I wanter job pretty bad. Times have been hard. Perhaps you recollect me—Jim Stone. You had me once working on the Paroo.'

"It was a blazing hot day in Central Queensland on one of the big cattle stations out from the railway line, a station which had not yet reached the dignity of fencing. The boss remembered that Jim Stone "was a good sort," and that it was forty miles to the next chance of a job. And there was always something to be done on a station.

"'All right, Stone. I think I can put you on to something for a month or two.'

"'Thanks. Start now?'

"'Look. I have got a few men on digging tanks, about thirty miles out. It's north-north-east. You can pick up their camp?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, I want you to take a bullock-dray out, with stores, and bring back anything they want sent back.'

"'Yes. Where are the bullocks?'

"'I haven't got a team broken in. But there's old Scarlet-Eye and two others broken in. You'll pick them up along that little creek there, six miles out'; he pointed indefinitely into the heat haze on the plain, where there seemed to be some trees on the horizon. 'Collar them, and then you'll find the milkers' herd right back of the homestead, only a few miles. Punch out seven of the biggest and make up your team.'

"'Yes. Where's ther dray?'

"'Behind the blacksmith's shed there. By the way, there are no yokes, but you'll find some bar-

iron and some timber at the blacksmith's shed. Knock out some yokes. I think there's one chain. You can make up another with some fencing wire.'

"'Right-oh.'

"And this Australian casual worker (at 30s. a week and rations) went his way cheerfully. He had to find some odd bullocks six miles out, in the flat, grey, illimitable plain; then find the herd of milkers somewhere else in that vague vastness, and break seven of them to harness; fix up a dray and make cattle yokes; and then go out into the depths to find a camp thirty miles out, without a fence or a track, and hardly a tree, to guide him.

"He did it all, because to him it was quite ordinary. The freshly-broken-in cattle had to be kept in the yokes for a week, night and day, else they would have cleared out. That was the only real hardship, in his opinion, and the cattle had to suffer that. He was content to be surveyor, waggon-builder, blacksmith, subduer of beasts, man of infinite pluck, resource, and energy, for 30s. a week and rations! And he was a typical sample of the 'back-country Australian.'"

In the Australian Bush most children can milk a cow, ride a horse, or harness him into a cart, snare or shoot game, kill a snake, find their way through the trackless forest by the sun or the stars, and cook a meal. In the cities, too, they are, though less skilled in such things, used to do far more for themselves than the average European child.

After the squatters in Australia came the gold-diggers. Gold was discovered in Victoria and in New South Wales. At first, strangely enough, an effort was made to prevent the fact being known that gold was to be found in Australia. Some of the rulers of the colony feared that the gold would ruin and not help the country. And certainly in the very early days of the gold-digging rushes, much harm was done to the settled industries of the land through everybody rushing away to the diggings. Farms were abandoned, workshops deserted, the sailors left their ships, the shepherds their sheep, the shop-keepers their shops—all with the gold fever. But that early madness soon passed away, and Australia got the benefit of the gold discoverers in a great increase of population. Most of those who came to dig gold remained to dig potatoes and other more certain wealth out of the land.

Do you remember the tale of the ancient wise man whose two sons were lazy fellows? He could not get them by any means to work in the vineyard. As long as his own hands could toil he tended the vineyard, and maintained his idle sons. But on his death-bed he feared for their future. So he made them the victims of a pious fraud. "There is a great sum in gold buried in the vineyard," he told them with his dying breath. "But I cannot tell you where. You must find that for yourselves."

Tempted by the promise of quick fortune, the idle

s dug everywhere in the vineyard to find the ied treasure. They never came across any actual l, but the good effect of their digging was such the vineyard prospered wonderfully and they grew rich from its fine crops.

o it was, in a way, with Australia. The gold overers did much good by attracting people to country in search of gold who, though they found gold, developed the other resources of a great country.

When the yields from the alluvial gold-fields decreased there was a great demand from the out-of-work diggers and others for land for farming, and the agricultural era began in Australia. Since then the growth of the country has been sound, and, if a little slow, sure. It has been slow because the ideal of the people has always been a sound and a general well-being rather than a too-quick growth. "Slow and steady" is a good motto for a nation as well as an individual.

CHAPTER II

AUSTRALIA OF TO-DAY

The diggings—The Government at Melbourne—The sheep-runs —The rabbits—The delights of Sydney.

If, by good luck, you were to have a trip to Australia now, you would find, probably, the sea voyage there rather protracted and perhaps a little

irksome. But fancy that over, and imagine yourself safely in Australia of to-day. Fremantle will be your destination. It is the port of Perth, which is the capital of West Australia. That great State occupies nearly a quarter of the continent; but its population is as yet the least important of the continental States, and not very much ahead of the little island of Tasmania. Still, West Australia is advancing quickly. On the north it has great pearl fisheries; inland it has gold-fields, which take high rank in the world's list, and it is fast developing its agricultural and pastoral riches.

Recently a trans-continental railway has been constructed, and you may take a very comfortable train, with dining and sleeping saloons and a bath-room, for Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. It is a charming city, surrounded by vineyards, orange orchards, and almond and olive groves. In the season you may get for a few pence all the grapes that you could possibly eat; and luscious oranges, peaches, nectarines, figs, and other fruits are just as cheap.

The climate is hot in summer, but not unpleasant. Adelaide has the reputation of being a very "good" city. It was founded largely by high-minded colonists from Britain, whose main idea was to seek in the new world a place where poverty and its evils would not exist. To a very large extent they succeeded. There are no slums in Adelaide and no starving children. Everywhere is an air of quiet comfort.

From Adelaide you may take the train to complete your trip, the end of which is, say, Brisbane. Leaving Adelaide, you climb in the train the pretty Mount Lofty Mountains and then sweep down on to the plains and cross the Murray River near its mouth. The Murray is the greatest of Australian rivers. It rises in the Australian Alps, and gathers on its way to the sea the Murrumbidgee and the Darling tributaries. There is a curious floating life on these rivers. Nomad men follow along their banks, making a living by fishing and doing odd jobs on the stations they pass. They are called "whalers," and follow the life, mainly, I think, because of a gipsy instinct for roving, since it is not either a comfortable or profitable existence. On the rivers, too, are all sorts of curious little colonies, living in barges, and floating down from town to town. You may find thus floating, little theatres, cinematograph shows, and even circuses.

The fisheries of these rivers are somewhat important, the chief fish caught being the Murray cod. It grows sometimes to a vast size, to the size almost of a shark ; but when the cod is so big its flesh is always rank and uneatable by Europeans.

Fishing for a cod is not an occupation calling for very much industry. The fisherman baits his line, ties it to a stake fixed on the river bank, and on the stake hangs a bell. Then the fisherman gets under the shadow of a gum-tree and enjoys a quiet life, reading or just lazing. If a cod takes the bait the

bell will ring, and he will go and collect his fish, which obligingly catches itself, and does not need any play to bring it to land.

Extensive irrigation settlements are now growing up along the banks of the River Murray, and they produce great quantities of raisins, currants, and other dried fruits. Many of the Australian soldiers returned from the Great War have been settled on these fruit farms, and are doing very well. The very ardent sunshine makes it easily possible to dry raisins and currants without artificial heat.

These Australian inland rivers are slow and sluggish, and fish, such as trout, accustomed to clear running waters, will not live in them. But in the smaller mountain streams, which feed the big inland rivers, trout thrive, and as they have been introduced from England and America they provide good sport to anglers.

The plain-country through which the big rivers flow is very flat, and is therefore liable to great floods. Australia has the reputation of being a very dry country ; as a matter of fact, the rainfall over one-third of its area is greater than that of England. In most places the rainfall is, however, badly distributed. After long spells of very dry weather there will come fierce storms, during which the rain sometimes falls at the rate of an inch an hour. This fact, and the curious physical formation of the continent, about which you already know, makes it very liable to floods.

Great floods of the past have been at Brisbane, the

capital of Queensland, destroying a section of the city; at Bourke (N.S.W.), and at Gundagai (N.S.W.). In the latter a town was destroyed and many lives lost. Another flood on the Hunter River (N.S.W.) was marked by the drowning of the Speaker of the local Parliament. But great loss of human life is rare; sacrifice of stock is sometimes, however, enormous. Cattle fare better than sheep, for they will make some wise effort to reach a point of safety, whilst sheep will, as likely as not, huddle together in a hollow, not having the sense even to seek the little elevations which are called "hills," though only raised a few feet above the general level.

I recall well a flood in the Narrabri (N.S.W.) district some seventeen years ago, and its moving perils. The hillocks on which cattle, sheep, and in some cases human beings, had taken refuge were crowded, too, with kangaroos, emus, brolgas (a kind of crane), koalas (known as the native bear), rabbits, and snakes. Mutual hostilities were for a time suspended by the common danger, though the snakes and the rabbits were rarely given the advantages of the truce if there were human beings present. An incident of that flood was that the little township of Terry-hie-hie (these aboriginal names are strange!) was almost wiped out by starvation. Beleaguered by the waters, it was cut off from all communication with the railway and with food-supplies. When the waters fell, the mud left on these black-soil plains was just as formidable a barrier. Attempt after attempt to send

flour through by horse and bullock teams failed. It was impossible for thirty horses to get through with one ton of flour! The siege was only raised when the population of the little town was on the very verge of starvation.

After crossing the Murray the train passes through what is known as "the desert"—a stretch of country covered with mallee scrub (the mallee is a kind of small gum-tree); but nowadays they are finding out that this mallee scrub is not hopeless country at all. The scrub is beaten down by having great rollers drawn over it by horses; that in time kills it. Then the roots are dug up for firewood, and the land is sown with wheat. Quite good crops are now being got from the mallee when the rains are favourable, but in dry seasons the wheat scorches off, and the farmer's labour is wasted. It is proposed now to carry irrigation channels through this and similar country. When that is done there will be no more talk of desert in most parts of Australia. It will be conquered for the use of man just as the American alkali desert is being conquered.

Leaving the mallee, the train comes in time to Ballarat, which used to be the great centre of the gold-mining industry. Round here gold was discovered in great lumps lying on the ground or just below the roots of the grass. People rushed from all parts of the world to pick up fortunes when this was heard of. The road from Melbourne was covered with waggons, with horsemen, with diggers

COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE — *Page 23*

on foot. Most of them knew nothing at all about digging, and also lacked the knowledge of how to get along comfortably under "camping-out" conditions, when every man has to be his own cook, his own washer-up, his own laundryman, as well as his own mining labourer. But the best of the men learned quickly how to look after themselves, to pitch a tent, to cook a meal, to drive a shaft, and to do without food for long spells when on the search for new goldfields. Thus they became resourceful and adventurous, and were of great value afterwards in the community. There is nowadays rather a tendency in civilized countries to bring children up too softly, to guard them too much against the little roughnesses of life. Such experiences as those of the Australian gold-fields show how good it is for men to be taught how to look after themselves under primitive conditions.

Life on the Australian goldfields, though wild, was not unruly. There was never any lynch law, never any "free shooting," as on the American goldfields. Public order was generally respected, though there were at first no police. The miners, however, kept up Vigilance Committees, the main purpose of which was to check thefts. Anyone proved guilty of theft, or even seriously suspected of pilfering, was simply ordered out of the camp.

The Chinese were very early in getting to know of the goldfields in Australia, and rushed there in great numbers. They were not welcomed, and there

was an exception to the general rule of good order in the Anti-Chinese riots on the goldfields. The result of these was that Chinese were prevented by the government from coming into the country, except in very small numbers, and on payment of a heavy poll-tax. When this was done the excitement calmed down, and the Chinese already in the country were treated fairly enough. They mostly settled down to growing vegetables or doing laundry-work, though a few still work as miners.

The objection that the Australians have to the Chinamen and to other coloured races is that they do not wish to have in the country any people with whom the white race cannot intermarry, and they wish all people in Australia to be equal in the eyes of the law and in social consideration. As you travel through Australia, you will probably learn to recognize the wisdom of this, and you will get to like the Australian social idea, which is to carry right through all relations of life the same discipline as governs a good school, giving respect to those who are most worthy of it, by conduct and by capacity, and not by riches or birth.

We have stayed long enough at Ballarat. Let us move on to Melbourne—" marvellous Melbourne," as its citizens like to hear it called. Melbourne is built on the shores of the Yarra, where it empties into Hudson Bay, and its sea suburbs stretch along the beautiful sandy shores of that bay. Few European or American children can enjoy such sea

beaches as are scattered all over the Australian coast. They are beautiful white or creamy stretches of firm sand, curving round bays, sometimes just a mile in length, sometimes of hugh extent, as the Ninety Miles Beach in Victoria. The water on the Australian coast is usually of a brilliant blue, and it breaks into white foam as it rolls on to the shelving sand. Around Carram, Aspendale, Mentone and Brighton, near Melbourne ; at Narrabeen, Manly, Cronulla, Coogee, near Sydney ; and at a hundred other places on the Australian coast, are beautiful beaches. You may see on holidays hundreds of thousands of people —men, women, and children — surf-bathing or paddling on the sands. It is quite safe fun, too, if you take care not to go out too far and so get caught in the undertow. Sharks are common on the Australian coast, but they will not venture into the broken water of surf beaches. But you must not bathe, except in enclosed baths in the harbours, or you run a serious risk of providing a meal for a voracious shark.

Sharks are quite the most dangerous foes of man in Australia. There have been some heroic incidents arising from attacks by sharks on human beings. An instance : On a New South Wales beach two brothers were bathing, and they had gone outside of the broken surf water. One was attacked by a shark. The other went to his rescue, and actually beat the great fish off, though he lost his arm in doing so. As a rule, however, the shark kills with one bite, attacking

the trunk of its victim, which it can sever in two with one great snap of its jaws.

Children on the Australian coast are very fond of the water. They learn to swim almost as soon as they can walk. Through exposure to the sun whilst bathing their skin gets a coppery colour, and except for their Anglo-Saxon eyes you would imagine many Australian youngsters to be Arabs.

The beaches of Melbourne are not its only attractions. The city itself is a very handsome one, and its great parks are planted with fine English trees. The view along Collins Street, past the rows of planes and elms to the Treasury Buildings, or that along Bourke Street to the Federal Parliamentary buildings, could hardly be surpassed for its impression of solidity and magnificence in any European city.

Every young citizen of the Empire should know something of the Commonwealth of Australia and its political institutions, because, as the idea of Empire grows, it is recognized that all people of British race, whether Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, or South Africans, or residents of the Mother Country, should know the whole Empire.

After Australia began to prosper it was found that the continent was too big to be governed by one Parliament in Sydney, so it split up into States, each with a constitution and government of its own. These States were New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, West Australia, and Tasmania. It was soon seen that a mistake had

been made in splitting up altogether. The States were like children of one family, all engaged as partners in one business, who, growing up, decided to set up housekeeping each for himself, but neglected to arrange for some means by which they could meet together now and again and decide on matters which were of common interest to all of them. The separated States of Australia were, all alike, interested in making Australia great and prosperous, and keeping her safe; but in their hurry to set up independent housekeeping they forgot to provide for the safeguarding of that common interest.

So soon as this was recognized, patriotic men set themselves to put things right, and the result was a Federation of the States, which is called the Commonwealth of Australia. The different States are left to manage for themselves their local affairs, but the big Australian affairs are managed by the Commonwealth Parliament, which now meets at Canberra, the new Federal capital, situated in the hilly country between Melbourne and Sydney. The first Parliament at Canberra was opened by the Duke of York in 1927. Some people sneer at the idea of a "Bush capital," but I think, and perhaps you will think with me, that there is something very pleasant and very promising of profit in the idea of the country's rulers meeting somewhere in the pure air of a quiet little city surrounded by the great Australian forest. And as things are now, the population of Australia is too

much centralized in the big cities, and it will be a good thing to have another centre of population.

In this railway trip across the continent you are being introduced to all the main features of Australian life, so that you will have some solid knowledge of the conditions of the country, and can, later on, in chapters which will follow, learn of the Bush, the natives, the birds and beasts and flowers, the games of Australia.

Leaving Melbourne, a fast and luxurious train takes you through the farming districts of Victoria, past many smiling towns, growing rich from the industry of men who graze cattle, grow wheat and oats and barley, make butter, or pasture sheep. At Albany the train crosses to Murray again, this time near to its source, and New South Wales is entered.

For many, many miles now the train will run through flat, grassed country, on which great flocks of sheep graze. This is the Riverina district, the most notable sheep land in the world. From here, and from similar plains running all along the western and northern borders of New South Wales, comes the fine merino wool, which is necessary for first-class cloth-making. The story of merino wool is one of the romances of modern industry. Before the days of Australia, Spain was looked upon as the only country in the world which could produce fine wool. Spain was not willing that British looms should have any advantage of her production, and the British woollen manufacturing industry, confined

to the use of coarser staples, languished. Now Australia, and Australia practically alone, produces the fine wool of the world. Australia merino wool is finer, more elastic, longer in staple, than any wool ever dreamed of a century ago, and its use alone makes possible some of the very fine cloths of to-day.

This merino wool is purely a product of Australian cleverness in sheep-breeding. The sheep imported have been improved upon again and again, quality and quantity of coat being both considered, until to-day the Australian sheep is the greatest triumph of modern science as applied to the culture of animals, more wonderful and more useful than the thoroughbred race-horse. It is only on the hot plains that the merino sheep flourishes to perfection. If he is brought to cold hill-country in Australia his coat at once begins to coarsen, and his wool is therefore not so good.

As you pass the sheep-runs in the train you will probably notice that they are divided into paddocks by fine-mesh wire-netting. That is to keep the rabbits out. The rabbit is accounted rather a desirable little creature in Great Britain. A rabbit-warren on an estate is a source of good sport and good food, and the complaint is sometimes of too few rabbits rather than too many. A boy may keep rabbits as pets with some enjoyment and some profit.

In Australia rabbits were first introduced by an

emigrant from England, who wished to give to his farm a home-like air. They spread over the country with such marvellous rapidity as to become soon a serious nuisance, then a national danger. Millions of pounds have been spent in different parts of Australia fighting the rabbit plague ; millions more will yet have to be spent, for though the rabbits are now being kept in check, constant vigilance is needed to see that they do not get the upper hand again. The rabbit in Australia increases its numbers very quickly : the doe will have up to eighty or ninety young in a year. There is no natural check to this ; no winter spell of bitter cold to kill off the young and feeble. The only limit to the rabbit life is the food-supply, and that does not fail until the pasturage intended for the sheep is eaten bare. Not only is the grass eaten, but also the roots of the grass, and the rabbit is a further nuisance because sheep dislike to eat grass at which bunny has been nibbling.

The campaign against the rabbit in Australia has had all the excitement and much of the misery of a great war. The march inland of the rabbit was like that of a devastating army. Smiling prosperity was turned into black ruin. Where there had been green pastures and bleating sheep there was a bare and dusty plain and starving stock.

At first wholesale poisoning was tried as a remedy for the rabbit plague. It inflicted a check, but had the evil of killing off many of the native birds and animals. There was an idea once of trying to spread

A SHEEP DROVER. *Page 26*

a disease among the rabbits, so as to kill them off quickly, but that was abandoned. Now the method is to enclose the pasture-lands within wire-netting, which is rabbit-proof, and within this enclosure to destroy all logs and the like which provide shelters for the rabbits, to dig up all their burrows, and to hunt down the rabbit with dogs. The best of the lands are being thus quite cleared of rabbits. The worst lands are for the present left to bunny, who has become a source of income, being trapped and his carcase sent frozen to England, and his fur utilized for hat-felt. But be sure that if you bring to Australia your rabbit pets with you from England they will be destroyed before you land, and you may reckon on having to face serious trouble with the law for trying to bring them into the country.

Whilst you have been hearing all this about the rabbit the train has climbed up from the plains to the Blue Mountains and is rushing down the coast slope towards Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, the chief commercial city of Australia, and one of the great ports of the Empire. Sydney is, I do really think, the pleasantest place in the world for a child to live in, though two hot, muggy months of the year are to be avoided for health's sake.

On the Blue Mountains, as you crossed in the train, you will have seen wild "gullies," as they are called in Australia—ravines in the hills which rise abruptly all around, sometimes in wild cliffs and sometimes in steep wooded slopes. These gullies

interlace with one another, one leading into another, and stretching out little arms in all directions. Turn into one and try to follow it up, and you never know where it will end. Well, once upon a time there was a particularly wild one of these gully systems on the coast hills where Sydney now is. Something sunk the level of the land suddenly, and the gullies were depressed below sea-level. The Pacific Ocean heard of this, broke a way through a great cliff-gate, and that made Sydney Harbour. Entering Sydney by sea, you come, as the ocean does, through a narrow gate between two lovely cliffs. Turn sharply to the left, and you are in a maze of blue waters, fringed with steep hills. On these hills is built Sydney. You may follow the harbour in all directions, up Iron Cove a couple of miles to Leichhardt suburb; along the Parramatta River (which is not a river at all, but one of the long arms of the ocean-filled gully system) ten miles to the orange orchard country; along the Lane Cove, through wooded hills, to another orchard tract; or, going in another direction, you may travel for scores of miles along what is called Middle Harbour, and then have North Harbour still to explore In spite of the nearness of the big city, and the presence here and there of lovely suburbs on the waterside, the area of Sydney Harbour is so vast, its windings are so amazing, that you can get in a boat to the wildest and most lovely scenery in an hour or two. The rocky shores abound in caves, where you can camp out in dryness and

comfort. The Bush at every season of the year flaunts wildflowers There are fish to be had everywhere; in many places oysters; in some places rabbits, hares, and wallabies to be hunted. Does it not sound like a children's paradise—all this within reach of a vast city?

But let us tear ourselves away from Sydney, and go on to Brisbane, passing on the way through Kurringai Chase, one of the great National Parks of New South Wales; along the fertile Hawkesbury and Hunter valleys, which grow Indian corn and lucerne, and oranges and melons, and men who are mostly over six feet high; up the New England Mountains, through a country which owes its name to the fact that the high elevation gives it a climate somewhat like that of England; then into Queensland along the rich Darling Down studded with wheat-farms, dairy-farms, and cattle-ranches; and finally to Brisbane, a prospering semi-tropical town which is the capital of the Northern State of Queensland. At Brisbane you will be able to buy fine pineapples for a penny each, and that alone should endear it to your heart.

Thus you will have seen a good deal of the Australia of to-day. You might have followed other routes. Coming via Canada, you would reach Brisbane first. Taking a "British India" boat you would have come down the north coast of Queensland and seen something of its wonderful tropical vegetation, its sugar-fields, banana and coffee planta-

tions, and the meat works which ship abroad the products of the great cattle stations.

This tropical part of Australia really calls for a long book of its own. But as it is hardly the Australia of to-day, though it may be the Australia of the future, we must hurry through its great forests and its rich plains. There are wild buffalo to be found on these plains, and in the rivers that flow through them crocodiles lurk. The crocodile is a very cunning creature. It rests near the surface of the water like a half-submerged log waiting for a horse or an ox or a man to come into the water. Then a rush and a meal.

If, instead of coming along the north, you had travelled via South Africa you might have landed first at Hobart and seen the charms of dear little Tasmania, a land of apple-orchards and hop-gardens, looking like the best parts of Kent. But you have been introduced to a good deal of Australia and heard much of its industries and its history. It is time now to talk of savages, and birds, and beasts, and games, and the like.

F. K. Giles

THE TOWN HALL, SYDNEY. Page 30

CHAPTER III

THE NATIVES

A dwindling race ; their curious weapons—The Papuan tree-dwellers—The cunning witch-doctors.

THE natives of Australia were always few in number. The conditions of the country secured that Australia, kept from civilization for so long, is yet the one land of the world which, whilst capable of great production with the aid of man's skill, is in its natural state hopelessly sterile. Australia produced no grain of any sort naturally ; neither wheat, oats, barley nor maize. It produced practically no edible fruit, excepting a few berries, and one or two nuts, the outer rind of which was eatable. There were no useful roots such as the potato, the turnip, or the yam, or the taro. The native animals were few and just barely eatable, the kangaroo, the koala (or native bear) being the principal ones. In birds alone was the country well supplied, and they were more beautiful of plumage than useful as food. Even the fisheries were infrequent, for the coast line, as you will see from the map, is unbroken by any great bays, and there is thus less sea frontage to Australia than to any other of the continents, and the rivers are few in number.

Where the land inhabited by savages is poor in

food-supply their number is, as a rule, small and their condition poor. It is not good for a people to have too easy times; that deprives them of the incentive to work. But also it is not good for people who are backward in civilization to be kept to a land which treats them too harshly; for then they never get a fair chance to progress in the scale of civilization. The people of the tropics and the people near the poles lagged behind in the race for exactly opposite but equally powerful reasons. The one found things too easy, the other found things too hard. It was in the land between, the Temperate Zone, where, with proper industry, man could prosper, that great civilizations grew up.

The Australian native had not much to complain of in regard to his climate. It was neither tropical nor polar. But the unique natural conditions of his country made it as little fruitful to an uncivilized inhabitant as was Lapland. When Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay, probably there were not 500,000 natives in all Australia. And if the white man had not come, there probably would never have been any progress among the blacks. As they were then they had been for countless centuries, and in all likelihood would have remained for countless centuries more. They had never, like the Chinese, the Hindus, the Peruvians, the Mexicans, evolved a civilization of their own. There was not the slightest sign that they would be able to do so in the future. If there was ever a country on earth

which the white man had a right to take on the ground that the black man could never put it to good use, it was Australia.

Allowing that, it is a pity to have to record that the early treatment of the poor natives of Australia was bad. The first settlers to Australia had learned most of the lessons of civilization, but they had not learned the wisdom and justice of treating the people they were supplanting fairly. The officials were, as a rule, kind enough ; but some classes of the new population were of a bad type, and these, coming into contact with the natives, were guilty of cruelties which led to reprisals and then to further cruelties, and finally to a complete destruction of the black people in some districts.

In Tasmania, for instance, where the blacks were of a fine robust type, convicts in the early days, escaping to the Bush, by their cruelties inflamed the natives to hatred of the white disturbers, and outrages were frequent. The state of affairs got to be so bad that the Government formed the idea of capturing all the natives of Tasmania and putting them on a special reserve on Tasman Peninsula. That was to be the black man's part of the country, where no white people would be allowed. The help of the settlers was enlisted, and a great cordon was formed around the whole island, as if it were to be beaten for game. The cordon gradually closed in on Tasman Peninsula after some weeks of " beating " the forests. It was found, then, that one

aboriginal woman had been captured, and that was all. Such a result might have been foreseen. Tasmania is about as large as Scotland. Its natural features are just as wild. The cordon did not embrace 2,000 settlers. The idea of their being able to drive before them a whole native race familiar with the Bush was absurd.

After that the old conditions ruled in Tasmania. Blacks and whites were in constant conflict, and the black race quickly perished. To-day there is not a single member of that race alive, Truganini, its last representative, having died about a quarter of a century ago.

On the mainland of Australia many blacks still survive ; indeed, in a few districts of the north, they have as yet barely come into contact with the white race. A happier system in dealing with them prevails. The Government are resolute that the blacks shall be treated kindly, and aboriginal reserves have been formed in all the States. One hears still of acts of cruelty in the backblocks (as the far

POPULATION : FULL-BLOOD AUSTRA-

	N.S.W.	Victoria.	Queensland.
Males ...	923	62	7,234
Females ...	674	49	5,380
Total ...	1,597	111	12,614

interior of Australia is called), but, so far as the Government can, it punishes the offenders. In several of the States there is an official known as the Protector of the Aborigines, and he has very wide powers to shield these poor blacks from the wickedness of others, and from their own weakness. In the Northern States now, the chief enemies of the blacks are Asiatics from the pearl-shelling fleets, who land in secret and supply the blacks with opium and drink. The Commonwealth Navy makes it part of its duty to patrol the northern coast and prevent Asiatics landing there to victimize the blacks.

With the assistance of the Chief Protectors of Aboriginals in the several States, an estimate was made at the time of the Census of 1921 of the number of full-blooded aborigines in Australia. The numbers so ascertained are shown in the following table. As the Chief Protector for Western Australia estimated that there were 10,000 aborigines with whom his department was not in

LIAN ABORIGINALS, April 4, 1921.

South Australia.	Western Australia.	Northern Territory.	Total.
876	13,611	9,466	32,172
733	11,976	7,883	26,695
1,609	25,587	17,349	58,867

touch, that number, equally divided between the sexes, has been included in the tabulated figures.

A very primitive savage was the Australian aboriginal. He had no architecture, but in cold or wet weather built little break-winds, called mia-mias. He had no weapons of steel or any other metal. His spears were tipped with the teeth of fish, the bones of animals, and with roughly sharpened flints. He had no idea of the use of the bow and arrow, but had a curious throwing-stick, which, working on the principle of a sling, would cast a missile a great distance. These were his weapons—rough spears, throwing-sticks, and clubs called nullahs, or waddys. (I am not sure that these latter are original native words. The blacks had a way of picking up white men's slang and adding it to their very limited vocabulary ; thus the evil spirit is known among them as the "debbil-debbil.") Another weapon the aboriginal had, the boomerang, a curiously curved missile stick which, if it missed the object at which it was aimed, would curve back in the air and return to the feet of the thrower ; thus the black did not lose his weapon. The boomerang shows an extraordinary knowledge of the effects of curves on the flight of an object ; it is peculiar to the Australian natives, and proves that they had skill and cunning in some respects, though generally low in the scale of human races.

The Australian aboriginals were divided into tribes, and these tribes, when food supplies were

good, amused themselves with tribal warfare. From what can be gathered, their battles were not very serious affairs. There was more yelling and dancing and posing than bloodshed. The braves of a tribe would get ready for battle by painting themselves with red, yellow, and white clay in fantastic patterns. They would then hold war-dances in the presence of the enemy ; that, and the exchange of dreadful threats, would often conclude a campaign. But sometimes the forces would actually come to blows, spears would be thrown, clubs used. The wounds made by the spears would be dreadfully jagged, for about half a yard of the end of the spear was toothed with bones or fishes' teeth. But the black fellows' flesh healed wonderfully. A wound that would kill any European the black would plaster over with mud, and in a week or so be all right.

Duels between individuals were not uncommon among the natives, and even women sometimes settled their differences in this way. A common method of duelling was the exchange of blows from a nullah. One party would stand quietly whilst his antagonist hit him on the head with a club ; then the other, in turn, would have a hit, and this would be continued until one party dropped. It was a test of endurance rather than of fighting power.

The women of the aboriginals were known as gins, or lubras, the children as picaninnies—this last, of course, not an aboriginal name. The women were not treated very well by their lords : they had to do

all the carrying when on the march. At mealtimes they would sit in a row behind the men. The game —a kangaroo, for instance—would be roughly roasted at the camp fire with its fur still on. The men would devour the best portions and throw the rest over their shoulders to the waiting women.

Fish was a staple article of diet for the Australian natives. Wherever there were good fishing-places on the coast or good oyster-beds powerful tribes were camped, and on the inland rivers are still found weirs constructed by the natives to trap fish. So far as can be ascertained, the Australian native was rarely if ever a cannibal. His neighbours in the Pacific Ocean were generally cannibals. Perhaps the scanty population of the Australian continent was responsible for the absence of cannibalism; perhaps some ethical sense in the breasts of the natives, who seem to have always been, on the whole, good-natured and little prone to cruelty.

The religious ideas of these natives were very primitive. They believed strongly in evil spirits, and had various ceremonial dances and practices of witchcraft to ward off the influence of these. But they had little or no conception of a Good Spirit. Their idea of future happiness was, after they had come into contact with the whites: "Fall down black fellow, jump up white fellow." Such an idea of heaven was, of course, an acquired one. What was their original notion on the subject is not at all clear. The Red Indians of America had a very

definite idea of a future happy state. The aboriginals of Australia do not seem to have been able to brighten their poor lives with such a hope.

Various books have been written about the folk-lore of the Australian aboriginals, but most of the stories told as coming from the blacks seem to me to have a curious resemblance to the stories of white folk. A legend about the future state, for instance, is just Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" put crudely to fit in with Australian conditions. I may be quite wrong in this, but I think that most of the folk-stories coming from the natives are just their attempts to imitate white-man stories, and not original ideas of their own. The conditions of life in Australia for the aboriginal were so harsh, the struggle for existence was so keen, that he had not much time to cultivate ideas. Life to him was centred around the camp-fire, the baked 'possum, and a few crude tribal ceremonies.

Usually the Australian black is altogether spoilt by civilization. He learns to wear clothes, but he does not learn that clothes need to be changed and washed occasionally, and are not intended for use by day and night. He has an insane veneration for the tall silk hat which is the badge of modern gentility, and, given an old silk hat, he will never allow it off his head. He quickly learns to smoke and to drink, and, when he comes into contact with the Chinese, to eat opium. He cannot be broken into any steady habits of industry, but where by wise kindness the

black fellow has been kept from the vices of civilization he is a most engaging savage. Tall, thin, muscular, with fine black beard and hair and a curiously wide and impressive forehead, he is not at all unhandsome He is capable of great devotion to a white master, and is very plucky by daylight, though his courage usually goes with the fall of night. He takes to a horse naturally, and some of the finest riders in Australia are black fellows.

An attempt is now being made to Christianize the Australian blacks. It seems to prosper if the blacks can be kept away from the debasing influence of bad whites. They have no serious vices of their own, very little to unlearn, and are docile enough. In some cases black children educated at the mission schools are turning out very well. But, on the other hand, there are many instances of these children conforming to the habits of civilization for some years and then suddenly feeling "the call of the wild," and running away into the Bush to join some nomad tribe.

It is not possible to be optimistic about the future of the Australian blacks. The race seems doomed to perish. Something can be done to prolong their life, to make it more pleasant; but they will never be a people, never take any share in the development of the continent which was once their own.

A quite different type of native comes under the rule of the Australian Commonwealth—the Papuan.

The Natives

Though Papua, or New Guinea, as it was once called, is only a few miles from the north coast of Australia, its race is distinct, belonging to the Polynesian or Kanaka type, and resembling the natives of Fiji and Tahiti.

Papua is quite a tropical country, producing bananas, yams, taro, sago, and cocoa-nuts. The natives, therefore, have always had plenty of food, and they reached a higher stage of civilization than the Australian aborigines. But their food came too easily to allow them to go very far forward. "Civilization is impossible where the banana grows," some observer has remarked. He meant that since the banana gave food without any culture or call on human energy, the people in banana-growing countries would be lazy, and would not have the stimulus to improve themselves that is necessary for progress. To get a good type of man he must have the need to work.

The Papuan, having no need of industry, amused himself with head-hunting as a national sport. Tribes would invade one another's districts and fight savage battles. The victors would eat the bodies of the vanquished, and carry home their heads as trophies. A chief measured his greatness by the number of skulls he had to adorn his house.

Since the British came to Papua head-hunting and cannibalism have been forbidden. But all efforts to instil into the minds of the Papuan a liking for work have so far failed. So the condition of the natives

is not very happy. They have lost the only form of exercise they cared for, and sloth, together with contact with the white man, has brought to them new and deadly diseases. Several missionary bodies are working to convert the Papuan to Christianity, and with some success.

The Papuan builds houses and temples. His tree-dwellings are very curious. They are built on platforms at the top of lofty palm-trees. Probably the Papuan first designed the tree-dwelling as a refuge from possible enemies. Having climbed up to his house with the aid of a rope ladder and drawn the ladder up after him, he was fairly safe from molestation, for the long, smooth, branchless trunks of the palm-trees do not make them easy to scale. In time the Papuan learned the advantages of the tree-dwelling in marshy ground, and you will find whole villages on the coast built of trees. Herodotus states of the ancient Egyptians that in some parts they slept on top of high towers to avoid mosquitoes and the malaria that they brought. The Papuan seems to have arrived at the same idea.

Sorcery is a great evil among the Papuans. In every village almost, some crafty man pretends to be a witch and to have the power to destroy those who are his enemies. This is a constant thorn in the side of the Government official and the missionary. The poor Papuan goes all his days beset by the Powers of Darkness. The sorcerer, the "pourri-pourri" man, can blast him and his pigs, crops, family (that is the

Papuan order of valuation) at will. The sorcerer is generally an old man. He does not, as a rule, deck himself in any special garb, or go through public incantations, as do most savage medicine-men. But he hints and threatens, and lets inference take its course, till eventually he becomes a recognized power, feared and obeyed by all. Extortion, false swearing, quarrels and murders, and all manner of iniquity, follow in his train. No native but fears him, however complete the training and education of civilization. For the Papuan never thinks of death, plague, pestilence or famine as arising from natural causes. Every little misfortune (much more every great one) is credited to "pourri-pourri" or magic. The Papuan, when he comes "under the Evil Eye" of the witch-doctor, will wilt away and die, though, apparently, he has nothing at all the matter with him; and since Europeans are apt to suffer from malarial fever in Papua, the witch-doctors are prompt to put this down to their efforts, and so persuade the natives that they have power even over Europeans.

A gentleman who was a resident magistrate in Papua tells an amusing tale of how one witch-doctor was very properly served. "A village constable of my acquaintance, wearied with the attentions of a magician of great local repute, who had worked much harm with his friends and relations, tied him up with rattan ropes, and sank him in 20 feet of water against the morning. He argued, as he explained at his trial for murder, 'If this man is the genuine article,

well and good, no harm done. If he is not—well, it's a good riddance!' On repairing to the spot next morning, and pulling up his night-line, he found that the magician had failed to 'make his magic good,' and was quite dead. The constable's punishment was twelve months' hard labour. It was a fair thing to let him off easily, as in killing a witch-doctor he had really done the community a service."

The future of the Papuan is more hopeful than that of the Australian aboriginal, and he may be preserved in something near to his natural state if means can be found to make him work.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANIMALS AND BIRDS

The kangaroo—The koala—The bulldog ant—Some quaint and delightful birds—The kookaburra—Cunning crows and cockatoo.

Australia has most curious animals, birds, and flowers. This is due to the fact that it is such an old, old place, and has been cut off so long from the rest of the world. The types of animals that lived in Europe long before Rome was built, before the days, indeed, of the Egyptian civilization, animals of which we find traces in the fossils of very remote periods — those are the types living in Australia to-day. They belong to the same epoch as the mammoth and the great flying lizards and other

creatures of whom you may learn something in museums. Indeed, Australia, as regards its fauna, may be considered as a museum, with the animals of old times alive instead of in skeleton form.

The kangaroo is always taken as a type of Australian animal life. When an Australian cricket team succeeds in vanquishing in a Test Match an English one (which happens now and again), the comic papers may be always expected to print a picture of a lion looking sad and sorry, and a kangaroo proudly elate. The kangaroo, like practically all Australian animals, is a marsupial, carrying its young about in a pouch after their birth until they reach maturity. The kangaroo's forelegs are very small; its hindlegs and its tail are immensely powerful, and these it uses for progression, rushing with huge hops over the country. There are very many animals which may be grouped as kangaroos, from the tiny kangaroo rat, about the size of an English water-rat, to the huge red kangaroo, which is over six feet high and about the weight of a sucking calf. The kangaroo is harmless and inoffensive as a rule, but it can inflict a dangerous kick with its hindlegs, and when pursued by dogs or men and cornered, the "old man" kangaroo will sometimes fight for its life. Its method is to take a stand in a water-hole or with its back to a tree, standing on its hindlegs and balanced on its tail. When a dog approaches it is seized in the kangaroo's forearms and held under water or torn to pieces. Occasionally

men's lives have been lost through approaching incautiously an old man kangaroo.

The kangaroo's method of self-defence has been turned to amusing account by circus-proprietors. The "boxing kangaroo" was at one time quite a common feature at circuses and music-halls. A tame kangaroo would have its forefeet fitted with boxing-gloves. Then when lightly punched by its trainer, it would, quite naturally, imitate the movements of the boxer, fending off blows and hitting out with its forelegs. One boxing kangaroo I had a bout with was quite a clever pugilist. It was very difficult to hit the animal, and its return blows were hard and well directed.

The different sorts of kangaroo you may like to know. There is the kangaroo rat, very small; the "flying kangaroo," a rare animal of the squirrel species, but marsupial, which lives in trees; the wallaby, the wallaroo, the paddy-melon (medium varieties of kangaroo); the grey and the red kangaroo, the last the biggest and finest of the species.

The kangaroo, as I have said, is not of much use for meat. Its flesh is very dark and rank, something like that of a horse. However, chopped up into a fine sausage-meat, with half its weight of fat bacon, kangaroo flesh is just eatable. The tail makes a very rich soup. The skin of the kangaroo provides a soft and pliant leather which is excellent for shoes. Kangaroo furs are also of value for rugs and overcoats.

KANGAROO HUNTING. *Page 47*

Of tree-inhabiting animals the chief in Australia is the 'possum (which is not really an opossum, but is somewhat like that American rodent, and so got its name), and the koala, or native bear. Why this little animal was called a "bear" it is hard to say, for it is not in the least like a bear. It is about the size of a very large and fat cat, is covered with a very thick, soft fur, and its face is shaped rather like that of an owl, with big saucer-eyes.

The koala is the quaintest little creature imaginable. It is quite harmless, and only asks to be let alone and allowed to browse on gum-leaves. Its flesh is uneatable except by an aboriginal or a victim to famine. Its fur is difficult to manipulate, as it will not lie flat, so the koala should have been left in peace. But its confiding and somewhat stupid nature, and the senseless desire of small boys and "children of larger growth" to kill something wild just for the sake of killing, has led to the koala being almost exterminated in many places. Now it is protected by the law, and may get back in time to its old numbers. I hope so. There is no more amusing or pretty sight than that of a mother koala climbing sedately along a gum-tree limb, its young ones riding on it pick-a-back, their claws dug firmly into its soft fur.

The 'possum is much hunted for its fur. The small black 'possum found in Tasmania and in the mountainous districts is the most valuable, its fur being very close and fine. Dealers in skins will

sometimes dye the grey 'possum's skin black and trade it off as Tasmanian 'possum. It is a trick to beware of when buying furs. Bush lads catch the 'possum with snares. Finding a tree, the scratched bark of which tells that a 'possum family lives upstairs in one of its hollows, they fix a noose to the tree. The 'possum, coming down at night to feed or to drink, is caught in the noose. Another way of getting 'possum skins is to shoot the little creatures on moonlight nights. (The 'possum is nocturnal in its habits, and sleeps during the day.) When there is a good moon the 'possums may be seen as they sit on the boughs of the gum-trees, and brought down with a shot-gun.

Besides its human enemies, the 'possum has the 'goanna (of which more later) to contend with. The 'goanna—a most loathsome-looking lizard—can climb trees, and is very fond of raiding the 'possum's home when the young are there. Between the men who want its coat and the 'goannas who want its young the 'possum is fast being exterminated.

Two other characteristic Australian animals you should know about. The wombat is like a very large pig; it lives underground, burrowing vast distances. The wombat is a great nuisance in districts where there are irrigation canals; its burrows weaken the banks of the water-channels, and cause collapses. The dugong is a sea mammal found on the north coast of Australia. It is said to be responsible for the idea of the mermaid. Rising

out of the water, the dugong's figure has some resemblance to that of a woman.

Then there is the bunyip—or, rather, there isn't the bunyip, so far as we know as yet. The bunyip is the legendary animal of Australia. It is supposed to be of great size—as big as a bullock—and of terrible ferocity. The bunyip is represented as living in lakes and marshes, but it has never been seen by any trustworthy observer. The blacks believe profoundly in the bunyip, and white children, when very young, are scared with bunyip tales. There may have been once an animal answering to its description in Australia ; if so, it does not seem to have survived.

In Tasmania, however, are found, though very rarely, two savage and carnivorous marsupials called the Tasmanian tiger and the Tasmanian devil. The tiger is almost as large as the female Bengal tiger, and has a few little stripes near its tail, from which fact it gets its name. The Tasmanian tiger will create fearful havoc if it gets among sheep, killing for the sheer lust of killing. At one time a price of £100 was put on the head of the Tasmanian tiger. As settlement progressed it became rarer and rarer, and I have not heard of one having been seen for some years. The Tasmanian devil is a marsupial somewhat akin to the wild cat, and of about the same size. It is very ferocious, and has been known to attack man, springing on him from a tree branch. The Tasmanian devil is likewise becoming very rare.

The existence of these two animals in Tasmania and not in Australia shows that that island has been a very long time separated from the mainland.

Australia is very well provided with serpents—rather too well provided—and the Bush child has to be careful in regard to putting his hand into rabbit burrows or walking barefoot, as there are several varieties of venomous snake. But the snakes are not at all the great danger that some imagine. You might live all your life in Australia and never see one ; but in a few country parts it has been found necessary to enclose the homesteads on the stations with snake-proof wire-fencing, so as to make some place of safety in which young children may play. The most venomous of Australian snakes are the death-adder, fortunately a very sluggish variety ; the tiger-snake, a most fierce serpent, which, unlike other snakes, will actually turn and pursue a man if it is wounded or angered ; the black snake, a handsome creature with a vivid scarlet belly ; and the whip-snake, a long, thin reptile, which may be easily mistaken for a bit of stick, and is sometimes picked up by children. But no Australian snake is as deadly as the Indian jungle snakes, and it is said that the bite of no Australian snake can cause death if the bite has been given through any cloth. So the only real danger is in walking through the Bush barefooted, or putting the hand into holes where snakes may be lurking.

Some of the non-venomous snakes of Australia are

THE NOMAD OF THE AUSTRALIAN INTERIOR

very handsome, the green tree-snake and the carpet-snake (a species of python) for examples. The carpet-snake is occasionally kept in the house or in the barn to destroy mice and other small vermin.

Lizards in great variety are found in Australia, the chief being one incorrectly called an iguana, which colloquial slang has changed to 'goanna. The 'goanna is an altogether repulsive creature. It feasts on carrion, on the eggs of birds, on birds themselves, on the young of any creature. Growing to a great size — I have seen one 9 feet long and as thick in the body as a small dog—the 'goanna looks very dangerous, and it will bite a man when cornered. Though not venomous in the strict sense of the word, the 'goanna's bite generally causes a festering wound on account of the loathsome habits of the creature. The Jew-lizard and the devil-lizard are two other horrid-looking denizens of the Australian forest, but in their cases an evil character does not match an evil face, for they are quite harmless.

Spiders are common, but there is, so far as I know, only one dangerous one—a little black spider with a red spot on its back. Large spiders, called (incorrectly) tarantulas, credited by some with being poisonous, come into the houses. But they are really not in any way dangerous. I knew a man who used to keep tarantulas under his mosquito-nets so that they might devour any stray mosquitoes that got in. The example is hardly

worth following. The Australian tarantula, though innocent of poison, is a horrible object, and would, I think, give you a bad fright if it flopped on to your face.

Australia is rich in ants. There is one specially vicious ant called the bulldog ant, because of its pluck. Try to kill the bulldog ant with a stick, and it will face you and try to bite back until the very last gasp, never thinking of running away. The bulldog ant has a liking for the careless picnicker, whom she—the male ant, like the male bee, is not a worker—bites with a fierce energy that suggests to the victim that his flesh is being torn with red-hot pincers. I have heard it said that but for the fact that Australia is so large an island, a great proportion of its population would by this time have been lost through bounding into the surrounding sea when bitten by bulldog ants. It is wise when out for a picnic in Australia to camp in some spot away from ant-beds, for the ant, being such an industrious creature, seems to take a malicious delight in spoiling the day for pleasure-seekers.

In one respect, the ant, unwillingly enough, contributes to the pleasure and amusement of the Australian people. In the dry country it would not be possible to keep grass lawns for tennis. But an excellent substitute has been found in the earth taken from ant-beds. This earth, which has been ground fine by the industrious little insects, makes a beautifully firm tennis-court.

It is not possible to leave the ant without mention of the termite, or white ant, which is very common and very mischievous in most parts of Australia. A colony of termites keeps its headquarters underground, and from these headquarters it sends out foraging expeditions to eat up all the wood in the neighbourhood. If you build a house in Australia, you must be very careful indeed that there is no possibility of the termites being able to get to its timbers. Otherwise the joists will be eaten, the floors eaten, even the furniture eaten, and one day everything that is made of wood in the house will collapse. All the mischief, too, will have been concealed until the last moment. A wooden beam will look to be quite sound when really its whole heart has been eaten out by the termites. Nowadays the whole area on which a house is to be raised is covered with cement or with asphalt, and care taken that no timber joists are allowed to touch the earth and thus give entry to the termites. Fortunately, these destructive insects cannot burrow through brick or stone.

In the Northern Territory there are everywhere gigantic mounds raised by these termites, long, narrow, high, and always pointing due north and south. You can tell infallibly the points of the compass from the mounds of this white ant, which has been called the "meridian termite."

Australia has a wild bee of her own (of course, too, there are European bees introduced by apiarists,

distilling splendid honey from the wild flowers of the continent). The aborigines had an ingenious way of finding the nests of the wild bee. They would catch a bee, preferably at some water-hole where the bees went to drink, and fix to its body a little bit of white down. The bee would be then released, and would fly straight for home, and the keen-eyed black would be able to follow its flight and discover the whereabouts of its hive—generally in the hollow of a tree. The Australian black, having found a hive, would kill the bees with smoke and then devour the whole nest, bees, honeycomb, and honey.

Australian birds are very numerous and very beautiful. The famous bird-of-paradise is found in several varieties in Papua and other islands along Australia's northern coast. The bird-of-paradise was threatened with extinction on account of the demand for its plumes for women's hats. So the Australian Government has recently passed legislation to protect this most beautiful of all birds, which on the tiniest of bodies carries such wonderful cascades of plumage, silver white in some cases, golden brown in others.

Some very beautiful parrots flash through the Australian forest. It would not be possible to tell of all of them. The smallest, which is known as the grass parrakeet, or "the love-bird," is about the size of a sparrow. I notice it in England carried around by gipsies and trained to pick out a card which "tells

you your fortune." From that tiny little green bird the range of parrots runs up to huge fowl with feathers of all the colours of the rainbow. There are two fine cockatoos also in Australia—the white with a yellow crest, and the black, which has a beautiful red lining to its sable wings. A flock of black cockatoos in flight gives an impression of a sunset cloud, its under surface shot with crimson.

Cockatoos can be very destructive to crops, especially to maize, so the farmers have declared war upon them. The birds seem to be able to hold their own pretty well in this compaign, for they are of wonderful cunning. When a crowd of cockatoos has designs on a farmer's maize-patch, the leader seems to prospect the place thoroughly ; he acts as though he were a general, providing a safe bivouac for an army ; he sets sentinels on high trees commanding a view of all points of danger. Then the flock of cockatoos settles on the maize and gorges as fast as it can. If the farmer or his son tries to approach with a gun, a sentinel cockatoo gives warning and the whole flock clears out to a place of safety. As soon as the danger is over they come back to the feast.

Even more cunning is the Australian crow. It is a bird of prey and perhaps the best-hated bird in the world. An Australian bushman will travel a whole day to kill a crow. For he has, at the time when the sheep were lambing, or when, owing to drought, they were weak, seen the horrible cruelties of the

crow. This evil bird will attack weak sheep and young lambs, tearing out their eyes and leaving them to perish miserably. There have even been terrible cases where men lost in the Bush and perishing of thirst have been attacked by crows and have been found still alive, but with their eyes gone.

It is no wonder that there is a deadly feud between man and crow. But the crow is so cunning as to be able to overmatch man's superior strength. A crow knows when a man is carrying a gun, and will keep out of range then ; if a man is without a gun the crow will let him approach quite near. One can never catch many crows in the same district with the same device ; they seem to learn to avoid what is dangerous. Very rarely can they be poisoned, no matter how carefully the bait is prepared.

Bushmen tell all sorts of stories of the cunning of the crow. One is that of a man who suffered severely from a crow's depredations on his chickens. He prepared a poisoned bait and noticed the bird take it, but not devour it ; that crow carefully took the poisoned tit-bit and put it in front of the man's favourite dog, which ate it, and was with difficulty saved from death ! Another story is that of a man who thought to get within reach of a crow by taking out a gun, lying down under a tree, and pretending to be dead. True enough, the crow came up and hopped around, as if waiting for the man to move, and so to see if he were really dead. After awhile, the crow, to make quite sure, perched

on a branch above the man's head and dropped a piece of twig on to his face! It was at this stage that the man decided to be alive, and, taking up his gun, shot the crow.

There may be some exaggeration in the bushmen's tales of the crow's cunning, but there is quite enough of ascertained fact to show that the bird is as devilish in its ingenuity as in its cruelty. In most parts of Australia there is a reward paid for every dead crow brought into the police offices. Still, in spite of constant warfare, the bird holds its own, and very rarely indeed is its nest discovered—a signal proof of its precautions against the enmity of man.

To turn to a more pleasant type of feathered animal. On the whole, the most distinctly Australian bird is the kookaburra, or "laughing jackass." (A picture of two kookaburras faces page 1 of this volume. They were drawn for me by a very clever Australian black-and-white artist, Mr. Norman Lindsay.) The kookaburra is about the size of an owl, of a mottled grey colour. Its sly, mocking eye prepares you for its note, which is like a laugh, partly sardonic, partly rollicking. The kookaburra seems to find much grim fun in this world, and is always disturbing the Bush quiet with its curious "laughter." So near in sound to a harsh human laugh is the kookaburra's call that there is no difficulty in persuading new chums that the bird is deliberately mocking them. The kookaburra has the reputation of killing snakes; it cer-

tainly is destructive to small vermin, so its life is held sacred in the Bush. And very well our kookaburra knows the fact. As he sits on a fence and watches you go past with a gun, he will now and again break out into his discordant "laugh" right in your face.

The Australian magpie, a black-and-white bird of the crow family, is also "protected," as it feeds mainly on grubs and insects, which are nuisances to the farmer. The magpie has a very clear, well-sustained note, and to hear a group of them singing together in the early morning suggests a fine choir of boys' voices. They will tell you in Australia that the young magpie is taught by its parents to "sing in tune" in these bird choirs, and is knocked off the fence at choir practice if it makes a mistake. You may believe this if you wish to. I don't. But it certainly is a fact that a group of magpies will sing together very sweetly and harmoniously.

One could not exhaust the list of Australian birds in even a big book. But a few more call for mention. There is the emu, like an ostrich, but with coarse wiry hair. The emu does damage on the sheep-runs by breaking down the wire fences. (Some say the emu likes fencing wire as an article of diet; but that is an exaggeration founded on the fact that, like all great birds, it can and does eat nails, pebbles, and other hard substances, which lodge in its gizzard and help it to digest its food.) On account of its mischievous habit of breaking

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN RIDING TO SCHOOL. *Page 75*

fences the emu is hunted down, and is now fast dwindling. In Tasmania it is altogether extinct. Another danger to its existence is that it lays a very handsome egg of a dark green colour. These eggs are sought out for ornaments, and the emu's nest, built in the grass of the plain (for the emu cannot fly nor climb trees), is robbed wherever found.

The brush turkey of Australia is strange in that it does not take its family duties at all seriously. The bird does not hatch out its eggs by sitting on them, but builds a mound of decaying vegetation over the eggs, and leaves them to come out with the sun's heat.

The brolga, or native companion, is a handsome Australian bird of the crane family. It is of a pretty grey colour, with red bill and red legs. The brolga has a taste for dancing; flocks of this bird may be seen solemnly going through quadrilles and lancers—of their own invention—on the plains.

Another strange Australian bird is called the bower-bird, because when a bower-bird wishes to go courting he builds in the Bush a little pavilion, and adorns it with all the gay, bright objects he can —bits of rag or metal, feathers from other birds, coloured stones and flowers. In this he sets himself to dancing until some lady bower-bird is attracted, and they set up housekeeping together. The bower-bird is credited with being responsible for the discovery of a couple of goldfields, the birds having

picked up nuggets for their bowers, these, discovered by prospectors, telling that gold was near.

If the bower-bird wishes for wedding chimes to grace his picturesque mating, another bird will be able to gratify the wish—the bell-bird which haunts quiet, cool glens, and has a note like a bell, and yet more like the note of one of those strange hallowed gongs you hear from the groves of Eastern temples. Often riding through the wild Australian Bush you hear the chimes of distant bells, hear and wonder until you learn that the bell-bird makes the clear, sweet music.

One more note about Australian nature life. In the summer the woods are full of locusts (cicadæ), which jar the air with their harsh note. The locust season is always a busy one for the doctors. The Australian small boy loves to get a locust to carry in his pocket, and he has learned, by a little squeezing, to induce the unhappy insect to "strike up," to the amusing interruption of school or home hours. Now, to get a locust it is necessary to climb a tree, and Australian trees are hard to climb and easy to fall out of. So there are many broken limbs during the locust season. They represent a quite proper penalty for a cruel and unpleasant habit.

CHAPTER V

THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

An introduction to an Australian home—Off to a picnic—The wattle, the gum, the waratah—The joys of the forest.

THE Australian child wakens very often to the fact that "to-day is a holiday." The people of the sunny southern continent work very hard indeed, but they know that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"; and Jill a dull girl too. So they have very frequent holidays—far more frequent than in Great Britain. The Australian child, rising on a holiday morning, and finding it fine and bright—very rarely is he disappointed in the weather of his sunny climate—gives a whoop of joy as he remembers that he is going on a picnic into the forest, or the "Bush," as it is called invariably in Australia. The whoop is, perhaps, more joyful than it is musical. The Australian youngster is not trained, as a rule, to have the nice soft voice of the English child. Besides, the dry, invigorating climate gives his throat a strength which simply must find expression in loud noise.

Let us follow the Australian child on his picnic and see something of the Australian Bush, also of an Australian home.

Suppose him starting from Wahroonga, a pretty suburb about ten miles from Sydney, the biggest

city of Australia. Jim lives there with his brothers and sisters and parents in a little villa of about nine rooms, and four deep shady verandas, one for each side of the house. On these verandas in summer the family will spend most of the time. Meals will be served there, reading, writing, sewing done there; in many households the family will also sleep there, the little couches being protected by nets to keep off mosquitoes which may be hovering about in thousands. And in the morning, as the sun peeps through the bare beautiful trunks of the white gums, the magpies will begin to carol and the kookaburras to laugh, and the family will wake to a freshness which is divine.

Around the house are lawns, of coarser grass than that of England, but still looking smooth and green, and many flower-beds in which all the flowers of earth seem to bloom. There are roses in endless variety—Jim's mother boasts that she has sixty-five different sorts—and some of them are blooming all the year round, so mild is the climate. Phlox, verbenas, bouvardias, pelargoniums, geraniums, grow side by side with such tropical plants as gardenias, tuberoses, hibisci, jacarandas, magnolias. In season there are daffodils, and snowdrops, and narcissi, and dahlias, and chrysanthemums. Recall all the flowers of England; add to them the flowers of Southern Italy and many from India, from Mexico, from China, from the Pacific Islands, and you have an idea of the fine garden Jim enjoys.

Beyond the garden is a tennis-court, and around its high wire fences are trained grape-vines of different kinds, muscatels and black amber and shiraz, and lady's-fingers, which yield splendidly without any shelter or artificial heat. On the other side of the house is a little orchard, not much more than an acre, where, all in the open air, grow melons, oranges, lemons, persimmons (or Japanese plums), apples, pears, peaches, apricots, custard-apples (a curious tropical fruit, which is soft inside and tastes like a sweet custard), guavas (from which delicious jelly is made), and also strawberries and raspberries.

The far corner is taken up with a paddock, for the horses are not kept in a stable, night or day, except occasionally when a very wet, cold night comes.

That is the surrounding of Jim's home. Inside the house there is to-day a great deal of bustle. Everybody is working—all the members of the family as well as the two maid-servants, for in Australia it is the rule to do things for yourself and not to rely too much on the labour of servants (who are hard to get and to keep). Even baby pretends to help, and has to be allowed to carry about a "billy" to give her the idea that she is useful. This "billy" is a tin pot in which, later on, water will be boiled over a little fire in the forest, and tea made. Food is packed up—perhaps cold meats, perhaps chops or steaks which will be grilled in the bush-fire. Always there are salads, cold fruit pies, home-

made cakes, fruit; possibly wine for the elders. But tea is never forgotten. It would not be a picnic without tea.

Now a drag is driven around to the front gate by the one man-servant of the house, who has harnessed up the horses and put food for them in the drag. Some neighbours arrive; a picnic may be made up of just the members of one family, but usually there is a mingling of families, and that adds to the fun. The fathers of the families, as like as not, ride saddle-horses and do not join the others in the drag; some of the elder children, too, boys and girls, may ride their ponies, for in Australia it is common for children to have ponies. The party starts with much laughter, with inquiries as to the safety of the "billy" and the whereabouts of the matches. It is a sad thing to go out in the Bush for a picnic and find at the last moment that no one has any matches with which to light a fire. The black fellows can start a flare by rubbing two sticks together, but the white man has not mastered that art.

The picnic makes its way along a Bush road four or five miles through pretty orchard country, given up mostly to growing peaches, grapes, and oranges, the cultivated patches in their bright colours showing in vivid contrast against the quiet grey-green of the gum-trees. It is spring, and all the peach-trees are dressed in gay pink bloom, and belts of this colour stretch into the forest for miles around.

The road leaves the cultivated area. The ground becomes rocky and sterile. The gum-trees still grow sturdily, but there is no grass beneath ; instead a wild confusion of wiry heather-like brush, bearing all sorts of curious flowers, white, pink, purple, blue, deep brown. One flower called the flannel-daisy is like a great star, and its petals seem to be cut of the softest white flannel. The boronia and the native rose compel attention by their piercing, aromatic perfume, which is strangely refreshing. The exhaling breath of the gum-trees, too, is keen and exhilarating.

Now the path dips into a little hollow. What is that sudden blaze of glowing yellow ? It is a little clump of wattle-trees, about as big as apple-trees, covered all over with soft flossy blossom of the brightest yellow. I like to imagine that the wattle is just prisoned sunlight ; that one early morning the sun's rays came stealing over the hill to kiss the wattle-trees while they seemed to sleep ; but the trees were really quite wide-awake, and stretched out their pretty arms and caught the sunbeams and would never let them go ; and now through the winter the wattles hide the sun rays away in their roots, cuddling them softly ; but in spring they let them come out on the branches and play wild games in the breeze, but will never let them escape.

Past the little wattle grove there is a hill covered with the white gums. The young bark of these

trees is of a pinky white, like the arms of a baby-girl. As the season advances and the sun beats more and more fiercely on the trees, the bark deepens in colour into red and brown, and deep brown-pink. After that the bark dies (in Australia most of the trees shed their bark and not their leaves), and as it dies strips off and shows the new fair white bark underneath.

Our party has now come to a gully (ravine) which carries a little fresh-water creek (stream) to an arm of the sea near by. This is the camping-place. A nice soft bit of meadow will be found in the shade of the hillside. The fresh-water stream will give water for the " billy " tea and for the horses to drink. Down below a dear little beach, not more than 100 yards long, but of the softest sand, will allow the youngsters to paddle their feet, but they must not go in to swim, for fear of sharks. The beach has on each side a rocky, steeply-shelving shore, and on the rocks will be found any number of fine sweet oysters. Jim and his mate Tom have brought oyster-knives, and are soon down on the shore, and in a very short while bring, ready-opened, some dozens of oysters for their mothers and fathers. The girls of the party are quite able to forage oysters for themselves. Some of them do so ; others wander up the sides of the gully and collect wildflowers for the table, which will not be a table at all, but just a cloth spread over the grass.

They come back with the news that they have seen

waratahs growing. That is exciting enough to take attention away even from the oysters, for the waratah, the handsomest wildflower of the world, is becoming rare around the cities. All the party follow the girl guides over a slope into another gully. There has been a bush-fire in this gully. All the undergrowth has been burned away, and the trunks of the trees badly charred, but the trees have not been killed. The gum has a very thick bark, purposely made to resist fire. This bark gets scorched in a bush-fire, but unless the fire is a very fierce one indeed, the tree is not vitally hurt. Around the blackened tree-trunks tongues of fire seem to be still licking. At a height of about six feet from the ground, those scarlet heart-shapes are surely flames? No, they are the waratahs, which love to grow where there have been bush-fires. The waratah is of a brilliant red colour, growing single and stately on a high stalk. Its shape is of a heart ; its size about that of a pear. The waratah is not at all a dainty, fragile flower, but a solid mass of bloom like the vegetable cauliflower ; indeed, if you imagine a cauliflower of a vivid red colour, about the size of a pear and the shape of a heart, growing on a stalk six feet high, you will have some idea of the waratah.

Two of the flowers are picked—Tim's father will not allow more—and they are brought to help the decoration of the picnic meal. Carried thus over the shoulder of an eager, flushed child, the waratah suggests another idea : it represents

exactly the thyrsus of the Bacchanals of ancient legends.

The picnickers find that their appetites have gained zest from the sweet salty oysters. They are ready for lunch. A fire is started, with great precaution that it does not spread; meat is roasted on spits (perhaps, too, some fish got from the sea near by); and a hearty, jolly meal is eaten. Perhaps it would be better to say devoured, for at a picnic there is no nice etiquette of eating, and you may use your fingers quite without shame as long as you are not "disgusting." The nearest sister to Jim will tell him promptly if he became "disgusting," but I can't tell you all the rules. It isn't "disgusting" to hold a chop in your fingers as you eat it, or to stir your tea with a nice clean stick from a gum tree. But it is "disgusting" to put your fingers on what anyone else will have to eat, or to cut at the loaf of bread with a soiled knife. I hope that you will get from this some idea of Australian picnic etiquette. But you really cannot get any real idea of picnic fun until you have taken your picnic meal out in the Australian Bush; no description can do justice to that fun. The picnic habit is not one for children only. The Jim whom we have followed will be still eager for a picnic when he is the father of a big Jim of his own; that is, if he is the right kind of a human being and keeps the Australian spirit.

After the midday meal, all sorts of games until the lengthening shadows tell that homeward time

comes near. Then the "billy" is boiled again and tea made, the horses harnessed up and the picnickers turn back towards civilization. The setting sun starts a beautiful game of shine and shadow in among the trees of the gum forest; the aromatic exhalations from the trees give the evening air a hint of balm and spice; the people driving or riding grow a little pensive, for the spell of the Australian forest, "tender, intimate, spiritual," is upon them. But it is a pensiveness of pure, quiet joy, of those who have come near to Nature and enjoyed the peace of her holy places.

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I took you from near Sydney to see the Australian forest and to learn something of its trees and flowers, because that part I know best, and its beauties are the typical beauties of the Bush. Almost anywhere else in the continent where settlement is, something of the same can be enjoyed. A Hobart picnic-party would turn its face towards Mount Wellington, and after passing over the foothills devoted to orchards, scale the great gum-forested mountain, and thus have added to the delights of the woods the beautiful landscape which the height affords. From Melbourne a party would take train to Fern-tree Gully and picnic among the giant eucalyptus there, or, without going so far afield, would make for one of the beautiful Hobson's Bay beaches. Farther north than Sydney, a note of tropical exuberance comes into the forest. You may see a

gully filled with cedars in sweet wealth of lavender-coloured blossom ; or with flame trees, great giants covered all over with a curious flowerlike red coral.

But everywhere in Australia, the hot north and cool south, on the bleak mountains and the sunny coasts, will be found the gum-tree. It is the national tree of this curious continent, the oldest and the youngest of the countries of the earth. Some find the gum-tree "dull," because it has no flaring, flaunting brightness. But it is not dull to those who have eyes to see. Its spiritual lightness of form, its quiet artistry of colour, weave a spell around those who have any imagination. Australians abroad, who *are* Australians (there are some people who, though they have lived in Australia—perhaps have been born there—are too coarse in fibre to be ever really Australians), always welcome with gladness the sight of a gum-tree ; and Australians in London sometimes gather in some friend's house for a burning of gum-leaves. In a brazier the aromatic leaves are kindled, the thin, blue smoke curls up (gum-leaf smoke is somehow different to any other sort of smoke), and the Australians think tenderly of their far-away home.

One may meet gum-trees in many parts of the world nowadays—in Africa, in America, in Italy and other parts of Europe ; for the gum-tree has the quality of healing marshy soil and banishing malaria from the air. They are, therefore, much planted

for health's sake, and the wandering Australian meets often his national tree.

A very potent medicine called eucalyptus oil is brewed from gum-leaves, and a favourite Australian "house-wives'" remedy for rheumatism is a bed stuffed with gum-leaves. So the gum-tree is useful as well as beautiful.

CHAPTER VI

THE AUSTRALIAN CHILD

His school and his games—"Bobbies and bushrangers"—Riding to school.

Australia is the child among civilized nations, and her life throughout is a good deal like that of a child in some regards—more gay and free, less weighed down with conventions and thoughts of rules than the life of an older community. So Australia is a very happy place for children. There is not so much of the "clean pinny" in life—and what wholesome child ever really enjoyed the clean pinny and the tidied hair part of life?

But don't run away with the idea that the Australians, either adults or children, are a dirty people. That would be just the opposite to the truth. Australians are passionately fond of the bath. In the poorest home there is always a bath-room, which is used daily by every member of the family. On

the sea-coast swimming is the great sport, though it is dangerous to swim in the harbours because of sharks, and protected baths are provided where you may swim in safety ; still children have to be carefully watched to prevent them from going in for a swim in unsafe places. The love of the water is greater than the fear of the sharks. The little Australian is not dirty, but he has a child's love of being untidy, and he can generally gratify it in his country, where conditions are so free and easy.

I am sorry to say that the Australian child is rather inclined to be a little too " free and easy " in his manners. The climate makes him grow up more quickly than in Great Britain. He is more precocious both mentally and physically. At a very early age, he (or she) is entrusted with some share of responsibility. That is quite natural in a new country where pioneering work is being done. You will see children of ten and twelve and fourteen years of age taking quite a part in life, entrusted with some little tasks, and carrying them through in grown-up fashion. The effect of all this is that in their relations with their parents Australian children are not so obedient and respectful as they might be. This does not work for any great harm while the child is young. Up to fifteen or sixteen the son or daughter is perhaps more helpful and more companionable because of the somewhat relaxed discipline. Certainly the child has learned more how to use its own judgment. After that age, however, the fact of

a loose parental discipline may come to be an evil. But there is, after all, no need to croak about the Australian child, who grows up to be a good average sort of woman or man as a general rule.

It is very difficult indeed for a child in Australia to avoid school. Education is compulsory, the Government providing an elaborate system to see that every child gets at least the rudiments of education; even in the far back-blocks, where settlement is much scattered, it is necessary and possible to go to school. The State will carry the children to school on its railways free. If there is no railway it will send a 'bus round to collect children in scattered localities. Failing that, in the case of families which are quite isolated, and which are poor, the State will try to persuade the parents to keep a governess or tutor, and will help to pay the cost of this. The effect of all this effort is that in Australia almost every child can read and write.

Going to school in the Bush parts of Australia is sometimes great fun. Often the children will have the use of one of the horses, and on this two, or three, or even four children will mount and ride off. When the family number more than four, the case calls for a buggy of some sort; and a child of ten or twelve will be quite safely entrusted with the harnessing of the horse and driving it to school.

In the school itself, a great effort is made to have the lessons as interesting as possible. Nature-study is taught, and the children learn to observe the facts

about the life in the Bush. There is a very charming writer about Australian children, Ethel Turner, who in one of her stories gives a picture of a little Bush school in one of the most dreary places in Australia —a little township out on the hot plains. I quote a little of it to show the sort of spirit which animates the school-teachers of Australia :

"A new teacher had been appointed to the half-time school, which was all the Government could manage for so unimportant and dreary a place. His name was Eagar, and his friends said that he suited the sound of it. Alert of eye, energetic in movement, it may be safely said that in his own person was stored up more motive power than was owned conjointly by the two hundred odd souls who comprised the population of Ninety Mile.

"There was room in Ninety Mile for an eager person. In fact, a dozen such would have sufficed long since to have carried it clean off its feet, and to have deposited it in some more likely position. But everyone touched in any way with the fire of life had long since departed from the place, and gone to set their homesteads and stackyards, their shops or other businesses elsewhere. So there were only a few limpets, who clung tenaciously to their spot, assured that all other spots on the globe were already occupied ; and a few absolutely resigned persons. There is no clog on the wheel of progress that may be so absolutely depended upon to fulfil its purpose as resignation.

"It was to this manner of a village that Eagar came. In a month he had established a cricket club; in two months a football club. The establishment of neither was attended with any great difficulty. In three months he had turned his own box of books into a free circulating library, and many of his leisure hours went in trying to induce the boys to borrow from him, and in seeing to it that, having borrowed, they actually read the books chosen.

"But his success with this was doubtful. The boys regarded 'Westward Ho!' as a home-lesson, while the 'Three Musketeers' set fire to none of them. Even 'Treasure Island' left most of them cold; though Eagar, reading it aloud, had tried to persuade himself that little Rattray had breathed a trifle quicker as the blind man's stick came tap tapping along the road. The sea was nothing but a name to the whole number of scholars (eighteen of them, boys and girls all told). Not one of them had pierced past the township that lay ninety miles away to the right of them; indeed, half the number had never journeyed beyond Moonee, where the coach finished its journey.

"Eagar got up collections—moths, butterflies, birds' eggs; he tried to describe museums, picture-galleries, and such, to his pupils. At that time he had no greater wish on earth than to have just enough money to take the whole school to Sydney for a week, and see what a suddenly widened horizon would do for them all. Had his salary come at that

time in one solid cheque for the whole year, there is no knowing to what heights of recklessness he would have mounted, but the monthly driblets keep the temptation far off.

"One morning he had a brilliant notion. In another week or two the yearly 'sweep' fever for far-distant races would attack the place, and the poorest would find enough to take a part at least in a ticket.

"He seized a piece of paper, and instituted what he called 'Eagar's Consultation.' He explained that he was out to collect sixty shillings. Sixty shillings, he explained, would pay the fare—coach and train—to Sydney of one schoolboy, give him money in his pocket to see all the sights, and bring him back the richer for life for the experience, and leaven for the whole loaf of them.

"'Which schoolboy?' said Ninety Mile doubtfully, expecting to be met with 'top boy.' And never having been 'top boy' itself at any time of its life, it had but a distrustful admiration for the same.

"'We must draw lots,' said Eagar.

"Upon which Ninety Mile, being attracted by the sporting element in the affair, slowly subscribed its shilling a-piece, and the happy lot fell to Rattray.

"He was a sober, freckled little fellow of ten, who walked five miles into Ninety Mile every morning, and five miles back again at night all the six months

of the year during which Government held the cup of learning there for small drinkers to sip."

I need not quote further about young Rattray's trip to Sydney and to the great ocean which Bush children, seeing for the first time, often think is just a big dam built up by some great squatter to hold water for his sheep. That extract shows the Bush school at its very hardest in the hot back-country. Of course, not one twentieth of the population lives in such places. I must give you a little of a description of a day in a Bush school in Gippsland, by E. S. Emerson, to correct any impression that all Australia, or even much of it, is like Ninety Mile :

"A rough red stave in a God-writ song was the narrow, water-worn Bush track, and the birds knew the song and gloried in it, and the trees gave forth an accompaniment under the unseen hands of the wind until all the hillside was a living melody. Child voices joined in, and presently from a bend in the track, 'three ha'pence for tuppence, three ha'pence for tuppence,' came a lumbering old horse, urged into an unwonted canter. Three kiddies bestrode the ancient, and as they swung along they sang snatches of Kipling's 'Recessional,' to an old hymn-tune that lingers in the memory of us all. As they drew near to me the foremost urchin suddenly reined up. The result was disastrous, for the ancient 'propped,' and the other two were emptied out on the track. From the dust they called their brother many names that are not to be found in school

books ; but he, laughing, had slid down and was cutting a twig from a neighbouring tree. 'A case-moth ! A case-moth !' he cried. The fallen ones scrambled to their feet. 'What sort, Teddy ? What sort ?' they asked eagerly.

"But Teddy had caught sight of me.

"'Well, what will you do with that ?' I asked.

"'Take it to school, sir ; teacher tells us all about them at school.' The answer was spoken naturally and without any trace of shyness.

"'Did you learn that hymn you were singing at school, too ?'

"''Tain't a hymn, sir. It's the "Recessional" !' This, proudly, from the youngest.

"But they had learned it at school, and when I had given them a leg-up and stood watching them urge the ancient down the hillside, I made up my mind that I would visit the school where the teacher told the scholars all about case-moths and taught them to sing the 'Recessional' ; and a morning or two later I did.

"The school stands on the skirt of a thinly-clad Gippsland township, and is attended by from forty to fifty children. Fronting it is a garden—a sloping half-acre set out into beds, many of which are reserved for native flowering plants and trees. School is not 'in' yet, and a few early comers are at work on the beds, which are dry and dusty from a long, hot spell. Little tots of six and seven years stroll up and watch the workers, or romp about on

grass plots in close proximity. Presently the master's voice is heard. 'Fall in!' There is a gathering up of bags, a hasty shuffling of feet, the usual hurry-scurry of laggards, and in a few moments two motionless lines stand at attention. 'Good-morning, girls! Good-morning, boys!' says the master. A chorused 'Good-morning, Mr. Morgan!' returns his salutation, and then the work of the day begins.

"But do the scholars look upon it as work? Something over thirty years ago Herbert Spencer wrote: 'She was at school, where her memory was crammed with words and names and dates, and her reflective faculties scarcely in the slightest degree exercised.' In those days, as many old State-school boys well remember, to learn was, indeed, to work, and when fitting occasion offered, we 'wagged it' conscientiously, even though we did have to 'touch our toes' for it when we returned. But under our modern educational system the teacher can make the school work practically a labour of love.

"The morning being bright, the children are put through some simple exercises and encouraged to take a few 'deep breathings.' Then the lines are formed again. 'Left turn! Quick march!' and the scholars file into the schoolhouse."

But we need not follow the school in its day's work, except to say that the ideal always is to make the work alive and interesting. Naturally, Australian children get to like school.

In the cities the schools are very good. All the

State schools are absolutely free, and even books are provided. A smart child can win bursaries, and go from the primary school to the high school, and then on to the University, and win to a profession without his education costing his parents anything at all. When I was a boy the State of Tasmania used to send every year two Tasmanian scholars to Oxford University, giving them enough to pay for a course there. That has since been stopped, but many Australians come to British Universities now —mostly to Oxford and Edinburgh—with money provided by their parents. There are, however, excellent Universities in the chief cities of Australia, and there is no actual need to leave the Commonwealth to complete one's education.

In the Bush, and indeed almost everywhere—for there is no city life which has not a touch of the Bush life—Australian children grow to be very hardy and very stoical. They can endure great hardship and great pain. I remember hearing of a boy in the Maitland (N.S.W.) district whose horse stumbled in a rabbit-hole and fell with him. The boy's thigh was broken and the horse was prostrate on top of him, and did not seem to wish to move. The boy stretched out his hand and got a stick, with which he beat the horse until it rose, keeping the while a hold of the reins. Then, with his broken thigh, that boy mounted the horse (which was not much hurt), rode home, and read a book whilst waiting for the doctor to come and set

his limb. Another boy I knew in Australia was bitten by a snake on the finger; with his blunt pocket-knife he cut the finger off and walked home. He suffered no ill effects from the snake-poison.

Endurance of hardship and pain is taught by the life of the Australian Bush. It is no place for the cowardly or for the tender. You must learn to face and to subdue Nature.

The games of the Australian child are just the British games, changed a little to meet local conditions. A very favourite game is that of "Bushrangers and Bobbies" ("bobbies" meaning policemen). In this the boys imitate as nearly as they can the old hunting down of the bushrangers by the mounted police.

The bushranger made a good deal of exciting history in Australia. Generally he was a scoundrel of the lowest type, an escaped murderer who took to the Bush to escape hanging, and lived by robbery and violence. But a few—a very few—were rather of the type of the English Robin Hood or the Scotch Rob Roy, living a lawless life, but not being needlessly cruel. It is those few who have given basis to the tradition of the Australian bushranger as a noble and chivalrous fellow who only robbed the rich (who, people argue, could well afford to be robbed), and who atoned for that by all sorts of kindness to the poor. Many books have been written on this tradition, glorifying the bushranger. But the plain fact is that most of the bushrangers

were infamous wretches for whom hanging was a quite inadequate punishment.

The bushranger, as a rule, was an escaped convict or a criminal fleeing from justice. Sometimes he acted singly, sometimes he had a gang of followers. A cave in some out-of-the-way spot, good horses and guns, were his necessary equipment. The site of the cave was important. It needed to be near a coaching-road, so that the bushranger's head-quarters should be near to his place of business, which was to stick-up mail-coaches and rob them of gold, valuables, weapons, and ammunition. It also needed to be in a position commanding a good view, and with more than one point of entrance. Two bushrangers' caves I remember well, one near to Armidale, on the great northern high-road. It was at the top of a lofty hill, commanding a wide view of the country. There was no outward sign of a cave even to the close observer. A great granite hill seemed to be crowned with just loose boulders. But in between those boulders was a winding passage which gave entrance to a big cave with a little fresh-water stream. A man and his horse could take shelter there.

Another famous bushranger's cave was near Medlow, on the Blue Mountains (N.S.W.), in a position to command the Great Western Road, along which the gold from Lambing Flat and Sofala had to go to Sydney. This was quite a perfect cave for its purpose. Climbing down a mountain gulley, you

came to its end, apparently, in a stream of water gushing from out a wall of rock. But behind that rock was a narrow passage leading to a cave which opened out into a little valley with another stream, and some good grass-land. To this valley the only means of access was the secret passage through the cave, which allowed a man and his horse to pass through. A gang of bushrangers kept this eyrie for many years undiscovered.

The latest big gang of bushrangers were the Kelly brothers, who infested Victoria. Ned Kelly was famous because he wore a suit of armour sufficiently strong to resist the rifle bullet of that day. The Kellys were finally driven to cover in a little country hotel in Victoria. They held the place against a siege by the police until the police set fire to it. Some of the gang perished in the flames. Others, including Ned Kelly himself, broke out and were shot or captured. He was hanged in Melbourne gaol.

But this is getting far away from the Australian children's games. It is a curious fact that when the Australian children assemble to play "Bushrangers and Bobbies," everybody wants to be a bushranger, and the guardian of the law is looked upon as quite an inferior character. Lots decide, however, the cast. The bushrangers sally forth and stick up an imaginary coach, or rob an imaginary country bank. The "bobbies" go in pursuit, and there is a desperate mock battle, which allows of much yelling

and running about, and generally causes great joy.

"Camping out" is another characteristic amusement of the Australian child. In his school holidays, parties go out, sometimes for weeks at a time, sailing around the reaches of the sea inlets, or, inland, following the course of some river, and hunting kangaroos and other game as they go. Generally adults accompany these parties, but when an Australian boy has reached the age of fifteen or sixteen he is credited with being able to look after himself, and is trusted to sail a boat and to carry a firearm. I can remember once on the way down to National Park (N.S.W.) for the Field Artillery camp, at one of the suburban stations there broke into the carriage reserved for officers, with a cheerful impudence that defied censure, a little band of boys. They had not a shoe among them, nor had anyone a whole suit of clothes. But they carried proudly fishing tackle and some rags of canvas which would help, with boughs, to build a rough shelter hut. The remainder of the train being full, they invaded the officers' carriage and made themselves comfortable. They were out for a few days' "camp" in the National Park. For about ten shillings they would hire a rowing-boat for three days. Railway fares would be sixpence or ninepence per head. A good deal of their food they would catch with fishing lines; bread, jam, a little bacon, and, of course, the "billy" and its tea were brought

with them. This was the great yearly festival, planned probably for many weeks beforehand, calling for much thought for its accomplishment, showing the sturdy spirit which is characteristic of the young Australian.

All the usual British games are played in Australia: tops, hoops, marbles among the younger children; cricket, football, lawn-tennis among their elders. The climate is especially suited for cricket, as it is warm and bright and sunny for so long a term of the year. On a holiday in the parks around the Australian cities may be seen many hundreds of cricket matches. All the schools have their teams. Most of the shops and factories keep up teams among the employees. These teams play in competitions with all the earnestness of big cricket. As the players grow better they join the electorate clubs. In every big parliamentary division there is an electorate club, made up of residents in that electorate. The club may put into the field as many as four teams in a day—its senior team and three junior teams. So there is an enormous amount of play—real serious match play—every Saturday afternoon and public holiday. Australia thus trains some of the finest cricketers of the world. For some years now the Australian Eleven has held the championship of the world.

The Australian child of the poorer classes usually leaves school at fourteen. The children of the richer may stay at school and the University until

nineteen or twenty. Usually they launch out into life by then. Australia is a young country, and its conditions call for young work.

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That finishes this "Peep at Australia." I have tried to give the young readers some little indication of what features of Australian life will most interest them. The picture is of a land which appeals very strongly to the adventurous type of the Anglo-Celtic race. I have never yet met a British man or boy who was of the right manly type who did not love Australian life after a little experience. The great distances, the cheery hospitality, the sunny climate, the sense of social freedom, the generous return which Nature gives to the man who offers her honest service —all these appeal and make up the sum of that strong attraction Australia has to her own children and to colonists from the Motherland.

THE END